CURSOR

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NEWSLETTER of the COMMODORE COMPUTER USERS GROUP (QLD) INC.

AMIGA EDITION

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MEETINGS — WHERE & WHEN

MAIN MEETING is held on **Tuesday 10th May** (7 pm - 10 pm) in the Bardon Professional Development Centre, 390 Simpsons Rd Bardon.
Entrance is through the Centre's Car Park in Carwoola Street.
Doors open 7 pm (Library & Sales). The meeting starts at 8 pm sharp.

══════> GPTERM & MODEM DEMO ON THE AMIGA <══════

PLEASE NOTE the changed date for this main meeting (2nd Tuesday)!!!

AMIGA WORK SHOP is held on **Sunday 8th May** 1988 (1 pm - 5 pm) in the Ithaca R.S.L. Hall, corner of Nash & Elizabeth Sts, Rosalie.

BEGINNERS TALKS & DEMOS

Opportunity to purchase Disks and other Accessories.
For further information:........Ph. Bruce Wylie - 359 9779 (a.h.)
or Steve McNamee - 262 1127 (a.h.)

REGIONAL MEETINGS

CANNON HILL: 4th Sat. of the month (12am - 9pm) in the Cannon Hill State School. Ph. Don Friswell - 343 1735 a.h.
CAPALABA: 3rd Saturday of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Capalaba State Primary School (Redl. Educ. Centre). Ph. David Adams - 396 8501 a.h.
KINGSTON: 2nd Friday of the month (7pm - 10pm) in the Kingston State School. Ph. Peter Martin - 290 1537 a.h.
PINE RIVERS: 1st Sunday of the month (1pm - 5pm) in the Strathpine State High School. Ph. Barry Bean - 269 7390 a.h.
SHERWOOD: 2nd Friday of the month (7.30pm) in the Graceville State School. Ph. Leigh Winsor - 379 2405 a.h. / Philip Parkin - 818 1172 a.h.
WAVELL HEIGHTS: 2nd Tuesday of the month (7.15pm - 9.45pm) in the Wavell State High School, Childers St. Entrance. Ph. Cor Geels - 263 2839
SUNSHINE COAST meets regularly. For meeting times, dates, places:
Ph. Harvey Riddle - 071/ 421 036 or Ph. Vic Mobbs - 071 / 941 330
MARYBOROUGH/HERVEY BAY: 4th Monday of the month (7pm - 10 pm) in the Sunbury St.School, Alice St. Ph. Terry Baade - 071 / 215059 a.h.

Copying of Commercial Software is NOT allowed at our Meetings!

GOODS & SERVICES

BLANK DISKS 5,25" (DS/DD) - $10.00 per 10 (+ $2 Postage)
BLANK DISKS 3,5" (DS/DD) - $30.00 per 10 (+ $2 Postage)
P. D. DISKS 3,5" - $6.00 ea. (+ $2 Postage for up to 5 Disks)
LABELS for 3,5" disks (68 x 68 mm) - 48 labels $1 (+ $2 Post. per order)
DISK BOXES for 3,5" disks (40) - $15.00 ea (+ $5.00 Postage)
DISK BOXES for 3,5" disks (80) - $20.00 ea (+ $5.00 Postage)
"AMIGA DOS SUMMARY" - $3.00 ea (+ $1.00 Postage)
"AMIGA BEGINNERS GUIDE" (CLI etc.) - $3.00 ea (+ $1.00 Postage)
"BBS INSTRUCTION BOOK" - $3.00 ea (+ $1.00 Postage)
AMIGA SPECIAL PRINTER CABLE (A500 & A2000) - $25.00. (+ $3.00 Postage)
ADDRESS LABELS (23 x 89 mm) - $14.00 per 1000 (+ $2 Postage)
RIBBONS for MPS-1000, GX/LX-80 PRINTERS: $9.00 (+ $1.00 Postage)
RIBBONS for MPS-1200/50, CITIZEN 120-D PRINTERS: $12.00 (+ $1 Postage)
RIBBONS for RITEMAN C or F PRINTERS: $13.00 (+ $1.00 Postage)

All orders to P.O. Box 274 - Springwood - QLD - 4127
Cheques to be made out to: C.C.U.G. (Q) Inc.

C. C. U. G. (Q.) INC. MEMBERSHIP FEES:

	Joining Fee:	Annual Membership:
Ordinary*	$10.00	$25.00
Country/Associate	$10.00	$15.00
Student/Pensioner	$10.00	$15.00
Family/Business	$10.00	$35.00

(*Within the B'ne Metropolitan Phone District)

Direct all membership enquiries to:

The Secretary, C.C.U.G. (Q) Inc.
P.O. Box 274, Springwood, Q'ld, 4127

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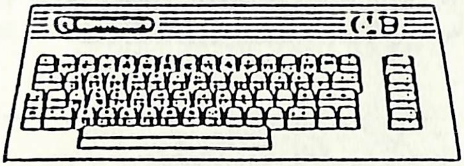

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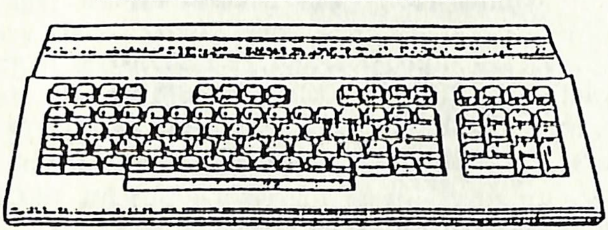

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ALL WORK CARRIES OUR 90-DAY WARRANTY!

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SPECIAL RATES FOR USER GROUP MEMBERS!

EDITOR'S NOTES

A warm welcome to our 'interstate correspondent' **Paul Gunther**, who sent us a very substantial review of *BOULDER DASH*.... who said we never review games? Paul is spending 1988 in Sydney where he is working for a reasonably well-known computer company which shall remain nameless.

Paul Blair is one of Australia's best known (8-bit) Commodore Gurus. His contributions have appeared in both Australian and overseas computer publications and we have been fortunate in getting a steady stream of articles from Paul. His latest article *ABOUT SUCCESS* is equally applicable to Amiga and 8 Bit owners, hence its appearance in these pages.

Paul's opposite number in the U.K. is **Mike Todd**. Mike however has gone 'Amiga', and I found his article on *CHIP, FAST AND SLOW MEMORY* in a recent (Jan/Feb 88) issue of the I.C.P.U.G. newsletter. It explains in simple terms the differences between these types of memory, and should clarify the memory lay-out of our computers.

On page 25 of our April issue the following sentence appeared: *"An Amiga wrote and said he wished he knew a way to save the files...."* I can assure you that this was definitely not the case! Somehow the word OWNER went missing after the word Amiga - that's the type of error which even the best spelling checker won't pick up!!!

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Why should we be limited to 80 columns on the standard medium resolution Amiga screen? Anybody who uses word processors knows that an 80 column screen (in practice they are usually only 75 columns, because of window 'frames' and scroll bars) means that you still have to scroll the screen if you want to use 80 or more characters per line.

As Amy only uses bit mapped screens there's no earthly reason why we should be locked into this 'IBM 80 column syndrome'. Hopefully one day we will see a word processor (and spread sheets too!) which will give us more than 80 characters per line. While experimenting with DPaint and several fonts I discovered that 96 characters per line are very readable in the standard (medium resolution) mode. In fact with a compact sans-serif type font it might be possible to get even a few more columns on the screen without sacrificing readability. I am waiting!

Ralph De Vries

RANDOM BITS

APRIL MAIN MEETING

Despite the dreadful weather there was a surprisingly good turnout for our April meeting. Our Amiga "Bring & Buy Software" offer was a total flop though - no software of any kind was offered for sale!

Our Games demo was limited to two games only. **Greg Phipps** demonstrated 'FERRARI FORMULA ONE' - one of the better racing car simulations, and **Lex Hinckley** showed the finer points of 'FLIGHT SIMULATOR II'. It proved once more that these sophisticated games take a lot of time to master.

Steve McNamee and Rod Palmer talked about a new Amiga Virus strain which is potentially a lot more damaging than the SCA virus. Steve has written a virus checker for this strain which will be available on one of the group's public domain disks. More details in the next CURSOR.

MAIN MEETING DATES FOR 1988

Tuesday 10th May 1988*	- *Modem & Terminal Demo*
Tuesday 7th June 1988	- *Packet Radio on Amy*
Tuesday 5th July 1988	- *Multi-Tasking - what is it?*
Tuesday 2nd August 1988	- *Annual General Meeting*
Tuesday 6th September 1988	-
Tuesday 4th October 1988	-
Tuesday 1st November 1988	-
Tuesday 6th December 1988	-

* NOTE: The May Meeting is NOT held on the 1st Tuesday!

NEW COMMODORE DEALER

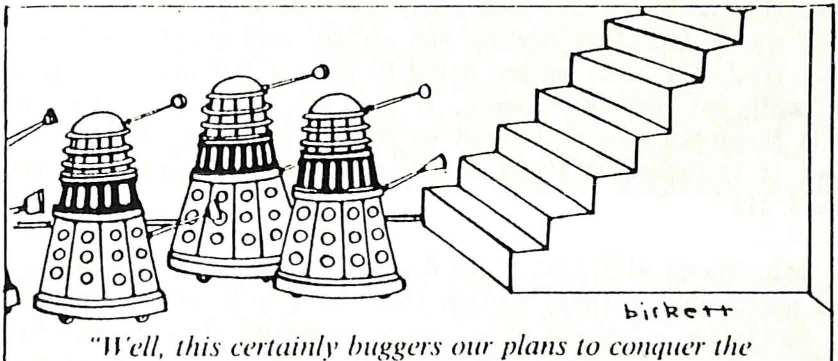
WESTEND COMPUTERS, a Victorian Commodore dealer, have opened a branch in the Myer Centre in Queen Street. Phone Number is 221 0055.

NEW DISK LABELS

We have obtained a new supply of labels for 3,5" disks. They come in sheets of 12 labels (68 x 68 mm) and we sell them in minimum quantities of 4 sheets (48 labels) for $1.00. Country members may find that it will pay them to order in larger quantities as the standard rate for postage and packing is $2.00.

WORD PERFECT BUG?

Two members have reported that the latest (25th Nov.'87) upgrade of WordPerfect will not work with the Sidecar installed. Earlier versions worked fine.



"Well, this certainly buggers our plans to conquer the Universe."

ABOUT "BUGS"

The magazine Amazing Computing has recently introduced a column called 'Bug Bytes', where they document software bugs and possible fixes or upgrades.

It would be a good idea if our members could submit their 'bugs' to the editor so that we can inform all our readers of possible problems with Amiga software and perhaps get some solutions to these problems.

ATARI SALES DRIVE

The new pricing structure of the Atari ST range is such that CBM won't have a great deal of worries. The Atari 1040ST with colour monitor retails for $1878. An A500 with 512K of extra memory + 1084 monitor will cost you appr. $1750 - $1800. The Ataris would have to be considerably cheaper to form a threat to Commodore.

YOUR WORKSHOP

As a first result of our recently conducted membership survey and also from numerous requests received from many newcomers, it has been decided to make some changes to the format of our Ithaca workshop.

The normal Public Domain Disk copying facilities will be available during our **June**, **August**, **October** and **December** workshops. As the organisation of this meeting rests completely upon the shoulders of Bruce Wylie and one or two other members who arrive shortly after 12 noon and never get away till 5.30, we are going to ask for volunteers to man our Public Domain and Disk Sales desks. If none are forthcoming these meetings will terminate when we run out of volunteers. A bit drastic? Perhaps, but it is rather unfair on Bruce and his few helpers to do all the work isn't it?

The main change will take place during the **May**, **July**, **September** and **November** workshops. At these meeting there will be NO public domain disk copying facilities - instead we are going to devote these meetings to the needs of the many members who have joined our group to learn more about using and getting the best out of their Amigas.

A roster of our more experienced members will guide newcomers (and not-so-newcomers as well) through the intricacies of both the WorkBench and CLI. We will teach them how to modify their Startup-Sequence (i.e. the writing of simple batch files) and how to add those extra 'bits and pieces' to their WorkBench disks. We would like to see and discuss both successful and unsuccessful attempts by members who are trying to customise their disks/programs. By this type of interaction we will all end up learning something in the process.

These beginners sessions will be an ongoing thing, but we are also looking at sessions in Basic programming and further down the track, for the more advanced members, some C and Modula-2 sessions. As well there are many other topics like application programs, graphics, printers, modems, sound, etc. for future discussions. As quite a few of these sessions involve the actual participation of our members it is recommended that they do bring their Amiga equipment to these sessions.

By offering this wider variety of activities we hope to better serve the interests of ALL members.

AMIGA DISK DRIVES

THE C.C.U.G.(Q) SAVES YOU MONEY

What does an Amiga owner do when his disk drive gives up the ghost? He takes it to his nearest dealer or service centre and in 9 out of 10 cases is told that the drive is not repairable and needs replacing - cost usually about $300.00.

The worst aspect of this sad story is that up till this month it could have been a simple case of your drive being mis-aligned, but the story was the same: "sorry, we are unable to fix it, needs replacing, cost $300.00 odd". No, this is NOT a case of the repair centre not knowing their job, but simply a case where the manufacturer has not supplied their repair centres with the necessary diagnostic tools to perform this type of adjustment.

But salvation was nigh! Yes, it came from the ranks of our own troops; it was none other than that famous duo of Steve McNamee and Greg Perry (we think that they are trading as GP Software, but we cannot be sure). After hearing one more sad tale during our last Amiga meeting of an owner whose drive had to be scrapped, they decided that it was time to write an alignment program for Amiga disk drives. No sooner said than done. They took the results of their labours to Don Goergen at PARCOM and asked him to test their new program out. The result of this test is that Parcom are now able to align Amiga disk drives!!! Instead of having to fork out $300.00 you can now have the job done for $50.00 (and even less if you bring your current C.C.U.G. membership card!).

Don told your editor that an incredible high percentage of Amiga disk drives are mis-aligned; yes even some new units are suspect! A lot of these alignment problems are due to DUST. Former users of 5,25" disks don't seem to realize that a great deal more information is squeezed on these tiny disks and that dust has a far greater effect on 3,5" drives than on the larger drives.

So our advice is to keep your disk drives covered at all times when not in use, and if your drive is behaving erratically take it to Parcom for an alignment check. At least if alignment is the cause of the problem you can thank Greg and Steve for saving you $250.00!

ABOUT SUCCESS

by Paul Blair

A lady came up to me one night at a User Group meeting, obviously wanting to talk. Her opening gambit was "This might seem like a trivial problem to you, but I can't see what I am doing wrong. I'll never make a success of this computer thing..." She was writing her own program, had come to a dead end, and had the courage to seek help.

A printout was produced, and as we chatted away about it, she told me she was about ready to use her computer as a door stop. So many of the things she had tried 'were not a success'. That last word caught my ear, and I'm not too sure I heard much else of what she said. But a few moments later she took the printout back from me, said "Ah! I see what I'm doing wrong" and vanished back into the mob.

Her words had gently reminded me that success (or failure) is a relative thing, and we each of us in turn must decide which applies to us. Some of my mail tells me the same thing about their authors. So I'm moved to write a few words to all of you who find it difficult to decide whether the effort you have to make in learning about your computer is worthwhile.

I'm sure some of you don't mind one way or the other, or perhaps don't recognise the signs. You use your own computer for business or as an entertainment centre, and writing your own material is not to your taste. But consider for a moment. Every neat spreadsheet you prepare or game you conquer is a test of your success or otherwise. If it doesn't compute, then you know where you stand (or sit!).

That result, one way or t'other, is pretty clear cut. But when you decide to take the plunge and roll your own programs, then the measure of your skills is not always as simple to detect. This is so especially if you come to the job a bit in awe of the whole thing after using software written by others.

It pays to remember a simple fact. No one has ever written a working program of any reasonable size that runs perfectly the first time. A few (a very few, I suspect) get it right the second time. And so it goes. Even when it does seem to be working the right way, a copy to a friend for "beta-testing" (which only means testing by someone who hasn't seen it before) may turn up some unexpected/unwanted results. This is probably the hardest phase to survive.

So what is success? I have a few criteria. The first is to pull out something you wrote, say, three months ago. If it looks a bit dated, or you can spot something you would do better if writing it again, then you are a success. If you tackle a task you've not tried before, like writing random files or making some background music, and it works (even sort-of), then that's success too. If you write some short note about what you have discovered in the wee small hours, bingo! And if you volunteer something you have written for inclusion in the club library, then you are making great strides, and can be proud of your achievement.

One last bit of advice to the diffident. Find a friend to work with. If you don't want to be an individual success, be a group one. Discuss, argue, criticize, and don't forget to laugh a bit. Later, maybe, you can go on and be a world beater in your own right.

I hope my lady (who I've never seen again) is happily programming away out there. She will no doubt make other mistakes as she sharpens her skills. But I like to think of her as a success.

BEGINNERS CORNER

ABOUT DISKMAN

by Ralph De Vries

The trickle of new Amiga members is now starting to turn into a flood, and with it the same beginners problems keep on cropping up. Most of these problems spring from a lack of knowledge of AmigaDOS.

In theory newcomers are completely shielded from AmigaDOS because of the Workbench with its mouse, windows, icons, drawers etc. which will indeed do most things that are asked of it. And yet.... all of a sudden you come upon a disk (mostly public domain ones) where your mouse and icons are suddenly not enough - you cannot "run" the disk or the programs. Take the case of a new member who gets a copy of the Fish (and Amicus) Library catalogue disk. This you cannot 'run' from the Workbench; so what to do? This is where AmigaDOS has to come to the rescue through its Command Line Interface. It is only through the CLI that you can actually inspect the contents of this disk (although it would be possible to view them through a word processor as well). To find out more about the use of the CLI you can start by purchasing our group's publications the **Amiga DOS Summary** and the **Amiga Beginners Guide.** Than there are numerous articles in our Software lending library amongst the

Megadisc and **Jumpdisk** magazine-type disks (And of course back issues of CURSOR have also quite a few articles on this topic).

A partial solution to this problem is through the use of the so-called Dirutil (directory utility) programs of which there are about half a dozen different versions to be found on public domain disks. There are also a couple of commercial programs available (Zing! and CLIMate) which do the same thing, but in a more sophisticated manner - they also use up a lot more of your computer's precious memory!

These programs allow you to inspect all the directories and files that are on your disk, but this is not where they stop. They also allow you to copy part or the whole of the disk to another disk, as well as delete, rename, move, read and print files.

During the last twelve months or so I have used a variety of these programs (including CLIMate), but I have found most of them to be less than satisfactory in one or more aspects. However recently I came upon a program called **DISKMAN.** This particular directory utility program is different from all the others because it works in the so-called high resolution mode - the mode which gives you between 50 to 64 text lines on the screen, but also causes eyestrain! However after using the program for some time I have decided to put up with the eyestrain because I feel that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

In the first place the program has two windows, which means that both your Source disk and Destination disk are on screen simultaneously. As there are some 50 odd lines on the screen you will find this quite a boon to compare for instance the C: directories on both disks, because most of the files will be shown on one screen. The moment you click on a file name or a directory name and issue the copy command it will automatically copy the information to the other window (i.e. you don't have to specify Source or Destination disks). As the program supports both 'floppy' and 'hard' drives as well as RAM and VDO (or VDK), it means that Amiga owners who only have one disk drive can now copy files from their internal drive to RAM, then change disks and now copy the files from RAM onto their new disk. Another major advantage is that on most DirUtil programs it is necessary to make a new directory first before you can copy files to that directory. With Diskman it is a simple matter of clicking on a directory name, issue the copy command and it will now create the directory AND copy the associated files to this directory on the new disk.

You can also incorporate your favourite text editor and picture viewing utility in DiskMan. I use the P.D. program **SHOW** in DiskMan to view all types of IFF pictures. It's a simple matter of clicking on the names of a series of picture files and than issue the SHOW command. The first picture comes on the screen and, when you have seen it, you just press the spacebar and the next picture is loaded - simple and elegant.

More advanced users will be pleased to know that the program is configurable and also has a file archiving menu which will either support the ARC or the ZOO archiving system.

The program is available on one of the group's PD disks and, if time permits, I will gladly demonstrate it at our next workshop meeting.

HOW MUCH MEMORY DO I REALLY NEED?

by Andre Marino

How much memory do I need ? Most of my friends have often asked this question. Well the answer is not simple because this question really consists of 2 components, "how much can I afford ?" and "how much memory do I need to run my application ?". The first question can only be answered by yourself (but often the answer will be not much at all). The second question though really depends on what particular type of application you intend to use. Thus I will outline some of the application areas which many of my friends and myself have found require memory based on my and others experiences with these applications.

Firstly, one of the most widely used applications would have to be a word processor. If one intends on using a serious package like "Word Perfect" some more memory is definitely needed. Although a 512K expansion module would probably be sufficient if you were intending to run the spelling checker from RAM to increase the speed you would definitely need at least 1MEG of expansion RAM. However, if you are prepared to use less sophisticated packages like "Scribble!" which also provides a spelling checker but is slightly more cryptic to use no expansion memory would be necessary.

Secondly, comes the games application (not that it should be called an application!). The most important point to mention here would be that nearly all games are written for the base model Amiga which has 512K. It would indeed be difficult to justify purchasing any extra memory if your sole use for the Amiga was games (unless you are rich).

Thirdly, business applications such as spreadsheets and databases are worth discussing. If you are intending to use a proper spreadsheet such as "Maxi-Plan" you will definitely need at least 1MEG of memory. Spreadsheets tend to use a sizable amount of memory for a decent sized task and usually one cannot get around this problem. Databases such as

"Superbase" can be run on a standard Amiga without too much trouble since the database is usually stored on a floppy diskette or hard-disk. However, it is handy to have these files in memory when doing LARGE queries since most of the query time is taken up with disk access. The size of expansion memory required in this case would largely depend on how large you database is. For some applications which use a hard-disk to store the database it would be impossible to fit a 20MB database into RAM.

Fourthly, the artistic applications like "Deluxe Paint" are an interesting topic. Since the Amiga is limited to 512K of chip memory it is usually pointless to have a large amount of memory. A 1MEG board would probably be enough since the application program itself would be the only part of the program which goes into this expansion RAM. This would free up some of the chip memory so it could be used for graphics. The points mentioned here would probably apply to any program which relies upon graphics (eg. any Desktop Publishing application) unless some special method was used to shift data between chip and fast memory.

Lastly, come the language and programming applications. Programmers always like quick compilations and fast responses with enough memory to have an editor running in the background. To be able to do all this and also keep the compiler and linker in RAM about 2MEG of expansion RAM would be needed. I have been using 2MEG with most 'C' and 'MODULA-2' compilers and have found that this is an excellent configuration. Unless one has a hard-disk to store compilers and linkers it is best to have a large memory. But regardless whether one has a hard-disk or only a floppy drive you would require at least an extra 512K. If you only have a floppy drive and decided to get an extra 512K you would have to put up with very slow compilation speed and could not keep much in memory (i.e. an editor). A reasonable alternative between the two would be 1MEG but one would still have to put up with having something on floppy or on the hard-drive.

Hopefully some of these points will help you to ascertain whether you really do need extra memory. These guidelines have been taken from my experiences and also some of my friends with memory requirements. The points mentioned above are probably not a complete list of things which must be taken into account when considering the purchase of extra memory. The best way to find out some more about memory requirements is usually to talk to a person who uses applications similar to those you intend on using.

-ooOoo-

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Our Main Meeting in MAY

will be held on the

SECOND TUESDAY of the month!

Write it in your diary now!

TUESDAY 10th MAY!

Both the MILTON (C64 & C128)

and Rosalie (Amiga) Work Shops

will be held on

Sunday 8th May (1pm - 5pm)

REVIEWS

BOULDER DASH

by Paul Gunther

****

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING! WARNING! WARNING! WARNING! WARNING! WARNING! Disclaimer - No responsibility will be taken on the authors behalf or C.C.U.G.(Q.) for any suicidal actions or tendencies or loss of sleep that is caused as a direct result of multiple successive deaths from playing the game 'Boulder Dash' as previewed in this article.

****

'Boulder Dash' is the title of a rather addictive game running on the Amiga. The disk I received contained the main game play module as well as a level editor. The main play Module contains no copyright notice. The level generator, when invoked displays a name 'Headcrash', possibly an author of some sort. So I can only assume at this stage that the software is public domain. If it is not, then I apologize to the author(s), for suggesting that the software may be public domain and challenge them to step forward and be identified and congratulated on a fine implementation.

Now on to the game. Maybe that is not saying enough. There are games that run on computers and there is Boulder Dash that runs on the Amiga. Other versions have seen action on some of the popular 8 bit CPU machines, but not until now has a machine been able to deliver such a high performance 'BoulderDash'.

Characteristics of the game :- There are consecutive levels numbered 0 to 80 inclusive. A level refers to a screen play area consisting of 62 by 30 squares. Only 20 by 13 are visible on the screen and new screen area is introduced by scrolling the screen. Each square may contain one of the 50 primitive play units.

The objective of the game is to progress sequentially through the various levels. Access to the next level is only allowed when you have successfully completed the current level. I will tell you now that there is no triumphant fanfare on completion of the final eightieth level - no rewarding conclusion. The philosophy of Boulder Dash is to enjoy the day to day struggle of completing one level after the next. Believe me, that on some of the more difficult levels the feeling of freedom after completing the level is reward enough.

After saying all that, what other incentives for playing the game are there, I hear you ask. Boulder Dash features some of the finest horizontal and vertical scrolling I have seen on the Amiga. When you play, you become totally contained within the game - in fact you control (via joystick) a small Boulder Dash character (does anyone know his name?) whose objective is to seek the door to the next level. Along the way he (She?) must collect (eat?) a predetermined number of gems that lie in a level. Sounds too easy so far ... A level may also contain boulders - large rocks the size of your man. These boulders may fall upon your man - causing him to implode into nothingness. You have an unlimited supply of men to send forth on your quest for that magic door. Your man, however has the strength to push one single boulder (boy is he strong!), but not two at once. Follows is a list of the 50 primitive play units :-

Player 1: Controlled by joystick port 2.

Exit Door: A door will shine or glisten when it is active. i.e. it leads to the next level. Exit doors only glisten when you have collected a predetermined number of gem points.

Exit Door (active): These doors are active at the start of the game. Sounds to good to be true. Usually these are only distractors that are placed in impossible to reach locations.

Key door (coloured): These are of one of four colours that may only be passed through when your have collected the corresponding colour key.

Key door (grey): These have the same characteristics as a coloured key door, but the door has no indicating colour - so you don't know what colour key to get (use trial and error method).

Keys: Used to enter doors. Can be used multiple times. May be worth points.

Pit set: A minimum pit consists of 6 different pit units. A pit is a container of 'acid' that will 'eat' anything that will fall, crawl, drip or enter it. A pit can only be one acid square deep.

Empty space: Appears as a blank square on the screen. Nothing special.

Invisible wall: Looks like an empty space, but cannot be penetrated by your man. Really nasty. I don't like these.

Brick wall (square): These walls can be destroyed, but only by a time bomb or a red bomb.

Brick wall (rounded): Same as square brick walls, but have a rounded top, so boulders and nuts will roll off.

Solid wall: Cannot be destroyed.

Running mine: This blue 'wall' will become active when a rock or green gem falls on it. For a certain amount of time it will allow these to be converted:- rocks into green gems, green gems into blue gems, blue gems into rocks. Can be destroyed.

Edible earth: Brown stuff that your man will glide through.

Non Edible Earth: Slightly higher density than edible earth and cannot be passed through.

Non Edible boulder permeable Earth: You can't pass through but rocks can. Tricky.

Boulder: Grey rock that can be used to squash things (including yourself).

Bombs: Red round boulders these sit dormant until dropped or something is dropped on them. They affect an area of 3 by 3 squares.

Nuts: Much like boulders but will crack into a diamond when a boulder drops on it.

Time Bomb: Collect one of these and you have blasting power. To detonate hold down joy button - as soon as it goes off - release button - run for dear-life. Same blast radius as red bombs. These take some practice becoming accustomed to.

Active time bomb: Like time bombs but are automatically detonated at the start of the game. Used for controlled explosions and really annoying the player.

Red wheel: 'Touch' these to activate for a certain amount of time. Once active, they will attract aliens.

Alien: Green 'martians' that will attempt to follow the least distance path to your boulder dash man. Pretty dumb, but in quantity can be distressing.

Beetles: Can be placed in any one of four orientations. These clicking nasties keep their right hand side to a wall. If crushed by a rock will explode into 11 diamond points.

Green cheese: This will grow at a determined growth rate (possibly not at all). Expanding in four directions, this dripping 'fungus' can leave you trapped.

Grey mechanised mines: Similar to beetles in mechanics but keep their left side to a wall. They only explode into blank space. Beetles or 'grey mechanised mines' will explode if they come into contact with the cheese (or yourself).

Yam-Yam : Mutant reject from a pac-man game. These orange yapping monsters with a mouth full of teeth and a tongue lapping about chant their 'yam-yam-yam-yam' song as they pace from corner to next available corner. They will explode into certain play units that may be useful.

Sapphire: Blue gem worth 3 gem points but a certain amount of play points.

Emerald: Green gem worth 1 gem point but a certain amount of play points.

Player 2: Only appears in the teamwork option, Same as Player 1 but controlled by joy port 1

Useful keys:

F9 pause game, F10 restart after pause.

F1, F2, F3 only useful in teamwork mode.

F1 gives player 1 screen priority.

F2 gives player 2 screen priority.

F3 locks both players onto the screen.

Esc, cursor keys only useful in the editor.

Esc: this will open an interlaced screen showing a full screen preview of your level. Useful for obtaining a 'birds eye view' of your level.

Cursor keys. These are used to scroll around your level. Shifted, they scroll in larger steps.

All of these combined with a predetermined time limit for each level make for some action packed game play. Time remaining is shown at the top left as well as number of gem points required to activate the exit door. One player mode is easiest to practice in. The team-work option requires two joysticks and two players. This makes for an entirely different sociable game strategy. Be warned:- find a friend with at least the same ability as you otherwise you'll be for ever cursing your friend. One important point here - BOTH players must reach separate exit doors for the level to be called complete in team-work mode.

After mastering the 81 levels that come standard with the game, you might want to try your hand at making some of your own levels. The number of combinations that are possible are incalculable. I would suggest that you make a backup of your Boulder Dash disk - one copy for playing the standard level set and one disk for experimentation with the editor. One disappointment that comes with the level generator is the inability to test your level from the editor. So a typical screen level debug sequence looks like this : make screen - quit editor - test level - reboot editor - debug screen - quit editor.... The actual screen design process could easily take another article itself. It takes a great deal of time to think of an original level that follows my suggested 'model' play protocols :-

The screen must not be overly difficult. If YOU can't solve the level after dozens of attempts then the level is obviously too hard. Most players would simply give up in disgust. My own preference is for action adventure type screens rather than mundane proceduralistic (and boring) sets.

Time limits:- setting a tough time limit can make a screen doubly challenging than simply the game play mechanics alone.

Use of invisible walls. These can be frustrating to a new player and should be avoided for most screens.

Overuse of a particular animated play unit. A level FULL of aliens (say) will grind the mighty Amiga to a snails pace as it attempts to individually animate almost 2000 nasties in real time.

Levels that require split second timings to reach the exit door in the last few seconds are not recommended. The first few seconds of life can be as hard as possible - but not at the end of a long level please. The above are recommendations only. However, if you feel that after developing at least ten levels yourself and that they all obey my suggested 'model' play protocols, then send them to me and I guarantee to send you my latest set of levels (that of course obey my play protocols) and are guaranteed solvable. Interesting point that - on my original disk, level 50, I recall had NO exit door - an impossible level. So I had to edit one in. I would suggest that after becoming reasonably proficient at Boulder Dash, and a level has you stumped for a MINIMUM of 3 hours, then permit yourself to have a 'judicious edit'. However don't get caught into the trap of reaching for the editor like a help key whenever things get tough. Life wasn't meant to be easy.

COMPETITION PRO 5000 JOYSTICK

by Paul Gunther

The first joystick I used with my Amiga was a Competition PRO 5000. This sturdy black beast had an unbreakable steel shaft - I mean unbreakable. Short of holding the joystick in a bench vice you couldn't even look like breaking the shaft. However, the casing would distort around the shaft itself before the shaft snapped. Fitted with two large arcade quality fire buttons the joystick proved its worth many times over. Internally, large leaf switches were provided on the joystick and buttons providing a reliable action. That model was distributed by Coin Op controls.

Today, a joystick identical in shape is found under the same name but distributed by a mob known as DYNAMICS. This reincarnation of the original is recognised by its transparent case with bright red buttons, handle and internals. Quite a gimmick, but the quality is still there. Four micro-switches provide the switching for the joystick action but trusty leaf switches still prevail for the two fire buttons. The micro-switches provide a VERY responsive control action, in fact almost too responsive when comparing it to an old, worn leaf switch comp pro 5000. I haven't had the joystick for many weeks so I can't make a statement on the LONG-TERM reliability of the microswitches. Any one else with this joystick please jot down any comments on responsiveness after having used the joystick for a longtime (say at least one year). One minor complaint that others, using the stick for the first time, may find is that due to the 'roundness' of the joystick, you sometimes may loose your orientation:- so you may think you moved up when in fact the joystick is pointed in another direction. Being accustomed to the joystick I don't notice this phenomenon - a firm hold is all that's required for total control. The fire buttons - two of them and being so large sometimes can be pressed accidentally. Again the correct hand hold will be found so this is avoided. Maintenance is absolutely minimal - only the occasional wipe to rid the stick of all those greasy hands coming into contact is required.

The Competition Pro 5000 joystick is a stick designed to be abused:- and come out a winner. Ideal for those frustrating sessions with Boulder dash or what ever else takes your Fancy. Highly recommended. Available at major department store retailers. A gift for less than $50.

Update : A joy stick very similar to the new Competition Pro 5000 but under the name of 'Turbo Joystick' has recently been released. This joystick has micro switches and retails for about $20 at Target. Not having any information about the 'Turbo' on hand I can't comment on its relative reliability or value. I trust a quick once over of the joystick can be submitted by an owner to the newsletter.

WORD PERFECT DATE BUG

by Paul Gunther

Here's a quick one for all you Word Perfect users :
Before starting up Word Perfect (4.1 Beta or 4.1), set the date to 01-Jan-88. Now boot up the word processor, and do a Date insert text. This shows the date as December 31, 1987. So much for automatic date insertion for this year! (Also some early dates this year are in error)

There's an easy cure for this one: Add the following line to the WP startup-sequence: **Date tomorrow.**
This useful tip was supplied by David Johnson [ed.]

CHIP, FAST AND SLOW MEMORY

by Mike Todd (I.C.P.U.G. Newsletter Jan/Feb '88)

To understand the problem, one needs an understanding of the philosophy behind the Amiga's organisation.

In order to allow the special video, audio and interface chips (Portia, Angus and Daphne - or PAD for short) to share memory with the main processor, a special scheme of interlocks is set up to avoid both sides accessing RAM together. It is arranged that these chips and the processor access the RAM alternately - a fine arrangement, unless the PAD chips have a lot of work to do (perhaps when handling a screen with four or five bit planes) in which case the processor may have to wait until the PAD chips are finished with it before being allowed its own access.

However, as a direct function of their design, the PAD chips can only access the first 512k of RAM (i.e. from $00 0000 to $07 FFFF) and this RAM, shared between the processor and the PAD chips is known as CHIP memory.

Normal RAM expansion on the Amiga (which can be up to 8 MegaByte, from $20 0000 to $9F FFFF) is not accessible to the PAD chips, so that the processor owns it exclusively and access can be much faster.

This RAM is referred to as FAST memory and, under normal circumstances, the Amiga A1000 (whose only expansion capability is in this memory area) will run fast, provided that the software and data are held in FAST RAM, with CHIP RAM being used almost exclusively for screen displays, audio waveform tables and disk buffers.

The A500 and A2000 are slightly different. The A2000 comes with a full 1 MByte of RAM, the A500 is easily (and fairly cheaply) expandable to 1 MByte - but, the additional 512k of RAM does not sit where you'd expect it (i.e. in the normal RAM expansion space) but instead, it occupies the area from $C0 0000 to $C7 FFFF.

This would be fine if this area were treated the same as the normal expansion area - but it isn't. In fact, it is subject to the same logic as the bottom 512k of CHIP RAM - even though the PAD chips cannot get at it! This means that, if the PAD chips are making greater than normal demands on the bottom 512k of RAM, any processor access to this expansion 512k will be slowed down.

Now, under most circumstances, this is unlikely to be noticed since the delays are only those that you'd have experienced with an unexpanded A1000.

So, let's look at two scenarios - the first, an A1000 with 1 MByte of expansion RAM (total RAM is 1.5 MByte), and second an A2000 with the same expansion RAM (giving a total of 2 MByte of RAM).

When the A1000 is turned on, a check is made for expansion RAM and the operating system puts most of its work areas in the expansion RAM (on the grounds that it is better to keep the bottom 512k clear for screens and so on). As a result, the vast majority of processor access is in FAST RAM and the expanded 1000 will run faster (sometimes significantly so) as a result.

With the A2000, the situation is complicated by the existence of the additional 512k of SLOW RAM. When started up, the A2000 does the same as the A1000, and checks for expansion RAM - the first it finds is the 512k of SLOW RAM, which it makes a note of - then it finds the 1 MByte of FAST RAM, and notes that also.

Unfortunately, when it comes to allocating memory for its own workspace, the operating system will "discover" the SLOW RAM first (since it appears in the available memory table first) and will therefore build its workspace there. Similarly, any software which needs memory, will be allocated memory in this area as first choice.

This means that comparisons between an expanded A1000 and an A2000 (or indeed an A500) will generally show that the A2000 is running slower - simply put, the expanded A1000 is operating in an area of RAM that is unaffected by the needs of the PAD chips, whilst the A2000 has been forced to use RAM that is slowed down by the PAD chips as a first choice, even when faster and efficient RAM is available.

Although not an ideal solution, it is possible to force the Amiga to allocate any FAST RAM first - but only once it has booted up, and so has its own workspace in SLOW RAM. This is achieved by running the utility SlowMemLast which makes the dreaded SLOW RAM the last choice when allocating memory - this could be done in a startup-sequence, but should be done before loading any application software.

The result will be that the application will load, and use FAST RAM as far as possible.

THE AMIGA MAGAZINE SCENE

Gradually the Amiga community are getting a decent range of magazines to choose from, but regrettably costs are high and several of the best magazines can only be obtained by direct subscription from overseas. With the arrival of Amiga User International in local news agencies I felt that it was time for an overview of these magazines.

AMIGA TRANSACTOR: Bi-Monthly, a technical magazine aimed at programmers and hardware hackers. First issue dated April '88. Currently by subscription from Canada only, but shortly to be distributed in Australia. Cost: appr. US$30.00 for 6 issues. Local costs: ???
AMIGAN APPRENTICE & JOURNEYMAN: Bi-monthly, newsletter style. What every newsletter should be like - critical reviews, programming segments etc. By subscription from the US only (US $34.00 by airmail). Not cheap, but certainly worth every cent.
AMAZING COMPUTING: Monthly, good reviews and programming segments covering Basic, C, Assembly and Forth. Only available from certain computer outlets at $9.50 per copy (airmail). By direct subscription from the US (US $35.00, surface) cost can be halved.
AMIGA WORLD: Glossy monthly. At $9.20 per copy from your local newsagent or computer store - overpriced, reviews are often suspect. By direct subscription you can reduce cost to appr. $6.00 per copy.
AMIGA USER INTERNATIONAL: Monthly, from the UK. The distributors (Gordon & Gotch?) must consider Amiga users a bunch of suckers. This magazine costs $7.45 in your local newsagent, but Commodore Computing International, the 8-Bit equivalent from the same publisher is some $3.00 cheaper! I consider this magazine grossly overpriced, unless you are only interested in games reviews. Their other reviews are completely advertiser oriented and as such highly suspect. NOT RECOMMENDED.
INFO: Bi-monthly from the US. Good reviews of software & hardware, about equally divided between C64/C128 and Amiga products. At $9.20 from your newsagent it is obviously too dear, but better value than several of the above mentioned magazines.
AUSTRALIAN COMMODORE & AMIGA REVIEW: Monthly and Australian. At $3.00 per copy the cheapest magazine around. Interesting for its Australian advertising content......

Editor

MAIL BOX

In the last few issues of 'Cursor' there have been some rather unfavourable comments made regarding Commodore dealers. I'd like to put in my two cents worth - from the other side.

From my first much-maligned Plus-4 to my now beloved Amiga, not to mention the 'other' inhabitant of our household - a poor overworked C-64, our family has been using one dealer, Computer View at Bundamba, and have always found them to be friendly and ever-willing to offer assistance. Hardware and software have been purchased at reasonable prices and any 'bad' items replaced as quickly as possible, and with apologies.

It seems a little rough that these dealers - who often receive the rough end from manufacturers - seem to get it in the neck from the users as well.

Give the guys a break. They're in business to make money - and they're going to be the last ones to set out to cause ill-feeling. Try talking to the dealers - you'll probably find out any unfairness or ill-considered action can be cleared up with just a phone call.

After all - where would we be without them?

The Redshaws (Ipswich).

We were pleased to see the review of our product, Amiga Smartkey, in the April 1988 edition of your newsletter. However, there are a number of errors in the review which I would like to correct. This is not intended as a criticism, either to your organisation or your reviewer, but merely to avoid any conflicting statements which might develop.

Firstly, the review says that "255 characters can be used for each keystroke". The number of key strokes which can be assigned to each key **is limited only by the amount of memory available.** *The 255-key maximum only applies to the REPEAT command, which is a quick way of telling SmartKey to repeat a key inside a definition up to 255 times without having to push it up to 255 times.*

The reviewer also reported a "bug" where SmartKey was "lost from memory" while inside the PAUSE command in one of his definitions. SmartKey **was not** *lost from memory. SmartKey is inactive while inside a PAUSE, and since the reviewer had not terminated the PAUSE in his definition by* *pressing [Enter] (not [Return]), SmartKey appeared to have "gone away". Pressing [Enter] would have fixed this by terminating the PAUSE and reactivating SmartKey. The reason for making the distinction between [Enter] and [Return] is to enable the user to enter more than one "instruction" inside a PAUSE. If you wanted to do this you would use the [Return] key between instructions, just as you would without SmartKey. When you have finished entering your multiple instructions and wished to continue with the SmartKey definition, you would press [Enter] to tell SmartKey to stop PAUSing.*

The final point to mention is that the reference to [Ctrl] [Alt] [Del] in the Glossary ***does not*** *indicate that the software was ported from the IBM. A program such as SmartKey, whose operation depends on hardware and low level ROM routines as well as the Amiga Intuition environment, could not be ported from one computer to another. The only IBM link is Amiga's SmartKey's user interface, which is based on that of the well-established IBM version of SmartKey. It is in fact the text of the Glossary, not the program, which was "ported" from the IBM.*

A couple of enhancements have been added since the review copy was sent to you. It is no longer necessary to use the RunBackground command with SmartKey. You simply execute the ***SmartKey*** *command from CLI or your Startup-Sequence. Also, when you save a file of key definitions, the current values of the SMART and SuperShift keys (default values are the keypad [-] and [.] mentioned in the review] are saved with that file so that you don't have to change them manually next time you use that set of definitions.*

Thank you for your support of an Australian product for the world's greatest microcomputer.

Susan Williams (FBN SOFTWARE, A.C.T.)

PREVIEW: TEXTPRO

TextPro is a new Amiga word processor from W. Germany (Data Becker). First impressions were good. It would make a good replacement for our old friend TextCraft. Screen updating is very fast. Printer drivers for Epson LQ850 and NEC 24 Pin printers. You can incorporate graphics within the text, but with certain restrictions. Allows for enlarged printing. No spelling checker. Flexible. Price ??? Wait for full review.

Editor

DISK LIBRARY

Fish Disk 129

DosKwik A pair of programs which allow you to save files, or a group of files, to one or more floppies for quick loading (loading up a ram disk for example). Version 2.0, update to disk 103.

MRBackUp A hard disk backup utility, that does a file by file copy to standard AmigaDOS floppy disks. Includes an intuition interface and file compression. Versions 2.0 (with sources) and 2.1

PaintJet An "official" Hewlett Packard PaintJet printer driver received directly from HP sources.

Patch Two independent ports of the very useful Unix utility "patch", which applies context diffs to text files to automatically update them.

Fish Disk 130

DirMaster A very nicely done shareware disk cataloger, submitted by the author for inclusion in the library. This is version 1.1, an update to the version released on disk 108.

Evo A human evolution toy/tutorial. Includes source.

Hp A nice RPN calculator program that supports calculations with binary, octal, decimal, hex, float, and complex numbers.

Mach A "mouse accelerator" program that also includes hotkeys, the features of sun mouse, clicktofront, and popcli, a title bar clock with a bbs online charge accumulator, and more. Version 1.6

PatEdit A pattern editor for creating patterns to input to the Amiga SetAfPt macro call. This call sets the area fill pattern for the area filling graphics calls such as RectFill, AreaDraw, etc.

QMan Mandelbrot generator written partially in assembly.

Fish Disk 131

Dfc Copies disks like Marauder, but multitasks. Replaces both diskcopy and format but is smaller than either. It even has a nice little Intuition interface. Includes source.

HyperBase Nice little shareware database management system. Version 1.6, binary only, source available from authors.

Life A new version of Tomas's ancient Life game, but with a new macro language for setting up patterns, some good examples, and some more good stuff. Includes source.

Mackie A Popcli replacement that draws pretty lines on the screen in blanking mode. Includes source.

Mg1b A version of Mg1b with an ARexx port and other improvements by Tomas Rokicki. Finally you can define macros and bind them to function keys in your startup file! Includes source.

WFrags Another version of Frags, but this one pops up a nice little window that updates occasionally. Necessary for developers who wonder what their program is doing to memory, or wonder why they can't load that program. Includes source.

Fish Disk 132

Berserk This animation, unveiled at the September 87 meeting of the First Amiga Users Group, got Leo a standing ovation. It is a "must see" for every Amiga user, and ranks up there with "Juggler" as a premier demo for the Amiga. Update of disk 100 - incl. source.

Fish Disk 133

Conman Extremely useful replacement for the standard console handler, that provides line editing and command line histories completely transparent to any application program that uses CON: windows. This program is shareware, and well worth a donation to the author. Version 1.1, binary only, update to version on disk 100. New features include additional editing keys, fast search keys, undo key, clear history command, and more.

Crc Two programs that are very useful for generating 16-bit CRC listings of the contents of disks, and verifying that a given disk's files still compute to the same CRC's as listed.

CrcLists Complete CRC check files for disks 1-128 of the library, using the Crc program also included on this disk. These were made directly from my master disks. Author: Fred Fish

Overscan Patches the Intuition library so that sizable windows with MaxHeight of 200 (400 in interlace) and screens with Height of 200 (400 in interlace) will take advantage of the PAL overscan capability of Intuition V1.2. This seems to be useful only for European-users that wish to run software written for the American market, without modifying the applications, but still using the additional space. Includes source.

Fish Disk 134

BoingThrows A 50 frame HAM animation done with Sculpt-3D, and minor touchups with DigiPaint. The animation took about 325 hours of runtime to generate.

Browser A workbench tool, using text-only windows, that makes all files in the system accessible for executing, copying, moving, renaming, deleting, etc. Billed as a "programmers workbench". Version 1.2, binary only.

Dme Version 1.29 of Matt's text editor. Dme is a simple WYSIWYG editor designed for programmers. It is not a WYSIWYG word processor in the traditional sense. Update to disk number 113.

Find Find is a utility which searches for files that satisfy a given boolean expression of attributes, starting from a root pathname and searching recursively down through the hierarchy of the file system. Very much like the Unix find program. Version 1.0.

Library Demo version of a shareware program that stores textual information without regard to structure or content, and allows complicated searching for specific patterns. Binary only.

SmartIcon This shareware program, submitted by the author, is an Intuition objects iconifier. Version 1.0 is limited to iconifying windows, which is still very handy. It adds a new "iconify gadget" to each window, that when clicked on, iconifies the window into an icon in the ram: disk. Binary only.

Fish Disk 135

TeXF A selection of 78 TeX fonts, with a conversion program to convert them to Amiga fonts. There are 22 different fonts at various sizes, ranging from 15 pixels high to more than 150 pixels. The conversion program can also be used with the fonts distributed with AmigaTeX, yielding an additional 1000 or so more fonts for use with other Amiga programs. Version 2.5, binary only.

Fish Disk 136

AsmToolBox An assembler "toolbox" created to make interfacing between assembler programs and AmigaDOS easy. Includes source.

Bison A replacement for unix "yacc" command. This is from the GNU (GNU is Not Unix) effort. It is a port of the latest GNU version, done by William Loftus, with the goal of preserving all of bison's current features. Includes source and testing program.

Iff2Pcs An interactive puzzle program . Version 1.1, an update to the version on disk 122, includes source.

Paste A version of the Unix paste utility. Paste concatenates corresponding lines of the specified files into a single output line (horizontal or parallel merging) or concatenates them into alternate lines (vertical or serial merging). Includes source.

YaBoingII A game program demonstrating hardware sprite usage, including collision detection. Update to the version on disk 36.

Zoo A file archiver, much like "arc" in concept, but different in implementation and user interface details. Version 1.71

Fish Disk 137

Ct An Amiga program to display images from a CT scanner along with several interesting sample images of scans of real people.

JeansIcons Miscellaneous cute icons created for AMUC's monthly newsletter disk. Submitted by Stephen Vermeulen.

Muncho A cute little program which plays a digitized sound sample when you insert or remove a disk from your drive.

Sit An update to the Set Icon Type program from disk 107. V.1.10.

VGad A new gadget editor that takes two pictures of the window and its gadgets, one being the normal gadget state and the other being the fully selected state, and then merges the data and converts to C

VirusX A boot sector virus check program that runs in the background and automatically checks all inserted disks for a nonstandard boot sector. Such disks can optionally have their boot sector rewritten to remove the virus.

VLabel A program to print fancy disk labels. It will combine an IFF picture and up to 50 lines of text and then print the result.

Fish Disk 138

AmigaLine A series of various technical notes for Amiga programmers.

Diff A program that uses the same algorithm as the Unix diff prg. and also produces context diffs, suitable for use with patch.

Foreach A simple but useful program that expands a wild card file specification and then invokes the specified command once per expanded filename, with the expanded filename as the command argument.

MacFont A conversion tool to convert Mac fonts to Amiga fonts.

ModulaTools Various useful routines for those programming in Modula on the Amiga. Update to version on disk 94, includes source.

Vt100 Two new versions of Dave's vt100 terminal emulator.

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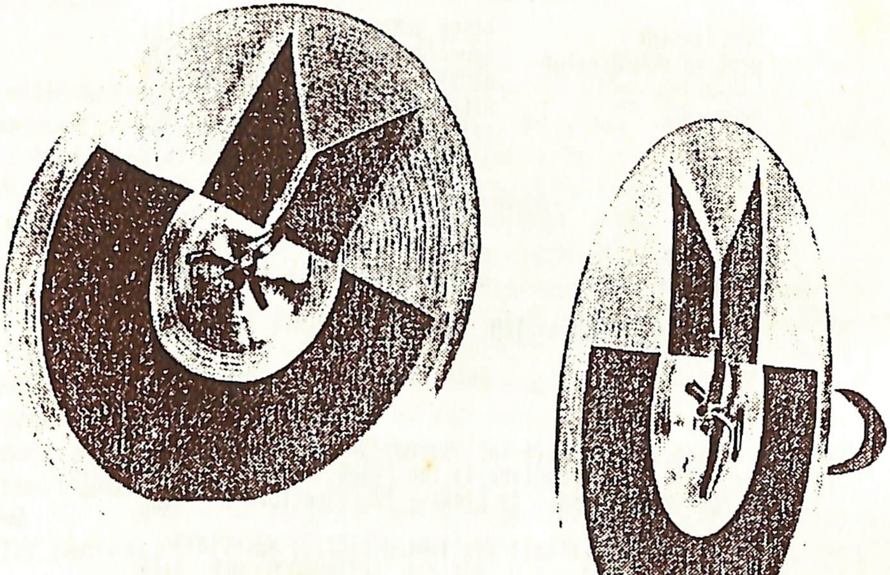

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